



COUNCIL SUMMONS

YOU ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN THE PRINCIPAL COMMITTEE ROOM, THE DEANE HOUSE, BELVEDERE ROAD, TAUNTON ON WEDNESDAY 6TH AUGUST 2003 AT 18:00.

AGENDA

The meeting will be preceded by a Prayer to be offered by the Mayor's Chaplain.

1. To report any apologies for absence
2. To receive any communications
3. To receive petitions from Local Government electors under Standing Order 17
4. To receive questions from Local Government electors under Standing Order 18
5. Freedom of the Borough
To receive a recommendation from the Community Leadership Panel (attached)
6. Somerset Direct
To consider a recommendation from the Executive (attached)

The following item is likely to be considered after the exclusion of the press and public because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to the Clause set out below of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

7. Appointment of Chief Executive Clause 1
To receive the recommendation of the Appointments Sub Committee

G P DYKE
Member Services Manager

The Deane House
Belvedere Road
TAUNTON
Somerset

TA1 1HE

30 July 2003

COUNCIL MEETING - 6 AUGUST 2003

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR DENINGTON CHAIR, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP REVIEW PANEL

FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

The Review Panel has given consideration to recommending Council to grant the freedom of the Borough to 40 Commando Royal Marines.

The Local Government Act 1972 (amended by the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980) allows a Borough or City Council to admit "persons of distinction and persons who have in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the city, borough or royal borough" as Honorary Freeman.

A resolution passed by not less than two third of the members voting at a specially convened meeting is required to admit the Honorary Freeman but this does not confer any rights upon them.

However, the conferring of the title of Honorary Freeman is the highest honour that a Council of a City or Borough can bestow and, in the view of many, should not be given too often.

Taunton Deane Borough Council have granted this honour on only two previous occasions. To the Light Infantry to mark its long association with the area and to Sir Edward du Cann to mark his many years as Member of Parliament for Taunton.

Under the terms of our Constitution any grant of freedom must be made by Council on the recommendation of this Panel.

40 Commando have been based in Taunton Deane for many years and during that time they have made a tremendous contribution to the life of the local community in many ways. It is felt, therefore, that the time is now right to recognise their presence in this area by granting them the freedom of the Borough.

Should the Council agree to grant this honour to 40 Commando there is a procedure, laid down in statute, which has to be followed.

The freedom resolution is passed at a special meeting of the Council when a formal presentation is made. It is necessary, however, for Council to agree that they will pass that formal resolution well in advance of that ceremony.

After passing the resolution the newly admitted Freeman may take the appropriate Freeman's Oath and sign the Freeman's Roll with the signature being witnessed by the Mayor and Chief Executive.

A sealed and illuminated certificate of the grant of the Honorary Freedom, incorporating a copy of the formal resolution, contained in a suitable Scroll Holder is then usually presented to the newly appointed Freeman by the Mayor with the recipient being given an opportunity to reply.

Associated with the Freedom is the "Freedom of Entry" which permits service units who have been granted the freedom to "march through the streets of the Borough with bayonets fixed, drums beating and Colours flying". 40 Commando have indicated that they would like to exercise this right should they be granted the freedom.

40 Commando have been consulted on their forthcoming availability and should the Council agree to this recommendation, a Special Council meeting, at which the formal resolution to grant the freedom is passed, will be held at 6.30 pm on 8 September 2003.

40 Commando have indicated that they would then like to exercise their right to parade through the town on the following day, 9 September 2003.

It is anticipated that the Council would arrange a reception for guests following the special Council meeting and offer hospitality to the marines following their parade through Taunton.

The cost of these proposals can be met from within existing budgets.

It is therefore unanimously RECOMMENDED by the Panel that the Freedom of the Borough be granted to 40 Commando Royal Marines in recognition of their service to the Taunton Deane community at a Special Council meeting on 8 September 2003.

Councillor Bryan Denington

COUNCIL MEETING - 6 AUGUST 2003

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL **COUNCILLOR HALL - RESOURCES**

Somerset Direct

Somerset Direct is a Government sponsored Invest to Save Budget Project designed to improve the handling of enquiries by the public to all Somerset Councils. The Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is funding 75% of initial project costs but not any ongoing funds.

Each partner has now been asked to commit to the benefits, savings and costs of the project to allow the County Council to sign contracts with suppliers on behalf of the Partnership so that the Council can proceed to live operations.

The Executive has therefore given consideration to whether to -

- adopt the Somerset Direct Model as a Council's methodology for dealing with customer services;
- request a Supplementary Estimate from general Fund Reserves to fund the costs of either £84,638 or £231,002 depending on if the reception area is remodelled;
- note the legal basis under which Somerset County Council will enter into contracts with suppliers on this Council's behalf;
- note the staffing arrangements and accommodation changes required.

Total project size is estimated to be £3.8m. Individual Councils will be responsible for sourcing on-going costs and realising savings.

The ODPM representative for e-government in the South West has recently restated keen interest in the project and the benefits it would bring to the people of Somerset. ODPM expect each partner to reflect the project and the resulting meeting of e-government targets in its CPA assessments.

Detailed consideration has been given to the anticipated improvements in access to services, increased customer satisfaction and the potential for efficiency savings. Each partner will be able to significantly improve their achievement of e-government targets through Somerset Direct.

Details of the finances of the project have also been looked at. A Supplementary Estimate of £231,002 will be required for a remodelled Reception and for Somerset Direct. If Somerset Direct is implemented without a remodelled Reception, the Supplementary Estimate required will be a maximum of £84,638. These costs will be spread over the Financial Years 2003/04 and 2004/05.

The agreement between the partners indemnified Somerset County Council as the Lead Authority and each other as partners in connection with the financial and contractual arrangements. It contained a 5-year commitment for each partner to meet the project set up and ongoing costs. If any partner withdrew, it has to give 12 months' notice and will be responsible for any resulting cost shortfall.

In Taunton Deane it is intended to establish a new Customer Services Team to operate the project.

There will be a need for all of the Customer Services Team to be in one place related to the face-to-face facilities in the Reception area. This presents an opportunity to revamp the area and present a modern customer-friendly area with proper sound management and a "Meeter and Greeter" to provide both security and greeting to members of the public. Staff will be fully consulted.

Whilst an improved remodelled Reception is considered essential to realise the full benefits of this project, it is not necessary to commit the finance for this aspect of the scheme at this stage. Somerset Direct can continue to be implemented with a Supplementary Estimate of a maximum of £84,638. Once this commitment has been made, further detailed and careful consideration can be given to any remodelling of the Reception area.

Part of managing the project was to identify and analyse risks and to instigate preventative actions. The Somerset Direct Risk Register was therefore regularly reviewed.

The technology for Somerset Direct was planned to go live on 1 April 2003 with the ability to handle all types of enquiry to a specified service level. Advisors would be able to fulfil some enquiries in depth whereas others would be passed to the back office. Between April 2003 and December 2005 the Council would progressively perform towards its target of fulfilling 80% of calls within the Customer Services area.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that:-

- (a) a Supplementary Estimate from General fund Reserves of a maximum of £84,638 be agreed;
- (b) the Somerset Direct Project be adopted;
- (c) a further report be submitted with full details of design and costing for a remodelled Reception area.

Councillor T J Hall